

Carl T. Rowan

Bell adds to doubts about King investigation

Who really was behind the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.?

Atty. Gen. Griffin Bell has added new doubts to those held by many Americans who have never believed that it was conceived and executed solely by a Southern ne'er-do-well, James Earl Ray.

Bell made some curious remarks recently on CBS's "Face the Nation" about a still secret Justice Department report on the performance of the FBI in determining and apprehending King's assassin. Asked if the report led him to believe that there was a conspiracy to kill the nation's greatest civil rights leader, Bell said:

"I think that if you read the report, you'll — you could lean to either side on it. You could say that there's no evidence of a conspiracy; but you could still wonder, you know, if there were — if there happened to be a conspiracy."

The attorney general added that this is why he wants to release the report — "I wanted everybody to be able to read the report, make their own minds up about it."

It is imperative to the national well-being that this report is released in full — especially since the House Assassinations Committee has self-destructed in disgusting conflict between its

chairman, Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, and its chief counsel, Richard Sprague.

I am among those who cannot understand where Ray got the money for the automobile he allegedly used to leave the Memphis assassination scene, or for the airline tickets he used to flee to Europe. I am convinced that someone or some agency with experience in forging passports and other documents assisted him in providing the phony travel papers he used.

Very clearly the FBI is suspect. Bell as much as said this when he said the report he referred to was "couched in terms of assessing the job . . . that the FBI did."

It has been established that the late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover detested Dr. King. He had his telephones tapped, his hotel rooms bugged, he placed him under physical surveillance, he sent squads of rumor-mongers around the nation to try to blacken King's reputation with the media and other opinion-makers. Most despicable of all, we know that Hoover's FBI tried to induce King to commit suicide by mailing to his wife a tape recording suggesting misconduct by the black leader.

While James Earl Ray was fleeing, some FBI operatives were trying to sell me the spurious line

that the Russians had killed King because of some hitch in his relations with "Soviet spies."

We may never know the truth — but we must search for it. Bell must release to the public every word of that report about the FBI's performance.

House Speaker Thomas (Tip) O'Neill should see that the Gonzalez committee is disbanded in entirety, and that another investigative committee with a totally new staff is named.

There is now no way the current committee can say anything to the American public that would be believable.

Yet, Atty. Gen. Bell's comments make it clear that some committee or some official is going to have to say a lot more about King's murder than has been said to the people up till now.